

The Epistle Dedicatorie.

unto their parent. There is a great difference, whether any Booke chooseth his Patrones, or finde them: This hath done both. For, so much were your L. L. likings of the severall parts, when they were acted, as before they were published, the Volume asked to be yours. We have but collected them, and done an office to the dead, to procure his Orphanes, Guardians; without ambition either of selfe-profit, or fame: onely to keepe the memory of so worthy a Friend, & Fellow alive, as was our SHAKESPEARE, by humble offer of his playes, to your most noble patronage. Wherein, as we have iustly obserued, no man to come neere your L. L. but with a kind of religious addresse; it hath bin the height of our care, who are the Presenters, to make the present worthy of your H. H. by the perfection. But, there we must also craue our abilities to be considered, my Lords. We cannot go beyond our owne powers. Country hands reach forth milke, creame, fruites, or what they haue: and many Nations (we haue heard) that had not gummes & incense, obtained their requests with a leauened Cake. It was no fault to approach their Gods, by what meanes they could: And the most, though meanest, of things are made more precious, when they are dedicated to Temples. In that name therefore, we most humbly consecrate to your H. H. these remaines of your seruant Shakespeare; that what delight is in them, may be euer your L. L. the reputation his, & the faults ours, if any be committed, by a payre so carefull to shew their gratitude both to the liuing, and the dead, as is

Your Lordshippes most bounden,

JOHN HEMINGE.
HENRY CONDELL.



To the great Variety of Readers.



From the most able, to him that can but spell: Till you are number'd. We had rather you were weigh'd. Especially, when the fate of all Bookes depends on your capacities: and not of your heads alone, but of your purses. Well! It is now publique, & wil stand for your priuiledges we know: to read and censure. Do so, but buy it first. That doth commend a Booke, the Stationer saies. Then, how odde soeuer your braines be, or your wisdomes, make your licence the same, and sell not. Iudge your sixe-pen'orth, your shillings worth, your five shillings worth at a time, or higher, so you rise to the iust rates, and come. But, what euer you do, Buy. Censure will not driue a Trade, or make the lacke go. And though you be a Magistrate of wit, and on the Stage at Black-Friers, or the Cock-pit, to arraigne Playes daunt know, these Playes haue had their triall already, and stood out all peales; and do now come forth quitted rather by a Decree of Court, then any purchas'd Letters of commendation.

It had bene a thing, we confesse, worthie to haue bene wished, the Author himselfe had liu'd to haue set forth, and ouerseen his owne writings; But since it hath bin ordain'd otherwise, and he by death parted from that right, we pray you do not envie his Friends, the owners of their care, and paine, to haue collected & publish'd them; and haue publish'd them, as where (before) you were abus'd with diuolfe, stolne, and surreptitious copies, maimed, and deformed by the fraud, and stealthes of iniurious impostors, that expos'd them: euen these are now offer'd to your view cur'd, and perfect of their limbes; and the rest, absolute in their numbers, as he conceiu'd them. Who, as he was a happie imitator of Nature, was a most gendle expresser of it. His nature and hand went together: And what he thought, he vttered without easinesse, that wee haue scarce receiued from him a blot in his papers. But it is not our prouince, who onely gather his works, and giue them to you, to praise him. It is yours that reade him. And there we hope your diuers capacities, you will finde enough, both to draw, and to iudge of you: for his wit can no more lie hid, then it could be lost. Reade him therefore; and againe, and againe: And if then you doe not like him, surely you are in some manifest danger, not to vnderstand him. And we leaue you to other of his Friends, whom if you need, can bee your guides: if you neede them not, you can leade your selues, and other. And such Readers we wish him.